Information for Adoption Families

Hertfordshire Adoption Support Service

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Hertfordshire

Contents

Introduction

In the past few months, the dream of becoming a legal parent may have seemed to be a distant reality. By the time you receive this booklet, you will have been through the approval process, the matching process, the introduction process and now, you have become a family.

It may seem to you that the Adoption Order is the end of the adoption process but in reality it is only the beginning. Along the way, you have probably heard about Adoption Support through your adoption support plan devised during the matching process. You may find that you still need to seek out resources and ideas to help you along the way as your child journeys through life into adulthood.

There may be times that you are not sure of yourself and you may feel that you need help in sorting out why your child behaves the way he or she does. This information book is to help you find resources and knowledge that you may need along the way.

Research tells us that there are specific adoption related issues that parents and families must cope with as the family develops and grows. Skills that adoptive parents need to raise an adoptive child can sometimes differ from those needed to raise birth children.

As you look through this book, you may find information that you feel would help you through your journey to becoming a parent. Other information might serve you better at a later time as your child grows.

Whatever your choice, we hope that you will find something in this book that will assist you in becoming the parent that you want to be so that you may nurture your child and family in the lifelong process of adoption.

With best wishes and hopes,
The Hertfordshire Adoption Support Team

Ways to Encourage Family Attachment

Becoming a family is work. It takes patience, flexibility patience, empathy, patience and creativity. And patience. Here are some tips that will help you adjust to a new family member as well as to adjust to the changes that are taking place within you as a parent.

- ***Create family rituals:*** With the input of new family members, think of new ways to celebrate birthdays, and religious holidays that incorporate the traditions that your child may bring with him or her.

- ***Create a new family history:*** Start a new family album that includes photos of the new extended family as well as fun pictures of each individual family member.

- ***Name changes:*** Changes to the child's birth first name is not often encouraged because the child's name is tied closely with the child's identity and sense of self. Yet, the standard practice is to go through the legal process of giving the child the family surname. It is wise to ask older children their views on whether or not they wish to change their surname. Alternative considerations could include hyphenated surnames.

- ***Spend time building relationships with all children in the family:*** Spend time with the adoptive child in forming a relationship. Spend time together as a family in shared activities to encourage a sense of shared values and goals. Make sure you spend individual time with other children in the family as well as family time.

- ***Listen to your child's feelings:*** Allow your child to sort out their feelings and communicate to them that you would like for them to feel comfortable to discuss their worries and concerns without having to worry about your reactions. Learn to be aware of your outward responses such as frowning, swearing, laughing at the child rather than with them or frequent interruptions during your conversation with them. Try to stop what you are doing if busy and maintain eye contact with the child as they talk to you.

- ***Talk openly to the child:*** Do not be afraid to communicate your feelings about the child becoming a part of the family. Be honest about family limits and about positive feelings you have toward the child. Write a welcome letter to your child.

- ***Adopt a style of communication that helps all members feel included:*** Make sure you include the adoptive child when you refer to the family. Include all members of the family in your comments and interactions with others.

- ***Be sensitive to each other's emotional needs:*** Recognise that levels of emotional closeness may be different for each family member. Try to create respect support and trust in family relationships.

- ***Create structure and routine:*** Your child needs to know that certain things happen on a regular basis such as what time meals occur, when the school day starts, when homework is to be done and when bedtime is scheduled. Your child needs to know these things in order to feel less stressed about what is expected.

- ***Give your child family duties:*** Assign your child to specific duties to help the family routine. This helps the child feel needed and helps them recognise their importance in the family structure.

- ***Establish rules and consequences for positive and negative actions:*** Teach your child the rules they need to know and tell them what the consequences of their actions will be before the rule is implemented. Be consistent in what you expect the outcomes and the consequences to be. Follow through with both positive and negative applications of consequences. For example you cannot allow a biological child to do one thing and punish your adoptive child for doing the same thing.

- ***Create opportunities for sharing:*** Plan to have ongoing discussions with family members and encourage them to share their thoughts about what adoption means to them. Different issues may arise so it will help to create an atmosphere of sharing ideas for how the family can blend successfully.

- ***Accept that "falling in love" with your child takes time:*** Accept, without guilt, that your feelings for your child will grow as the relationship grows. Forming a loving relationship that lasts a lifetime may be slower with older children. In some cases, commitment comes first and love comes second. Remember to acknowledge your differences whilst validating your child's worth. (Eldridge, 1999)

- ***Have fun:*** The initial part of the adoption process can be emotionally intense, it is important to find time to laugh together and enjoy each other's company as a family.

- ***Provide a nurturing sensory environment for children:*** For example, spend time after school with a cup of tea and toast just listening to your child. Warm the child's pyjamas or bath towel before bed and bath. Provide adequate play equipment that encourages gross motor and fine motor work with the parent. Attend parent and child yoga classes together and practise at home. (Bhreathnach, 2009) Provide a microwavable heated teddy for the child to snuggle.

Common Questions Adopted Children Might Ask

As a new parent you may begin to anticipate that your child may have questions concerning his or her background. It is advisable to prepare for the multiple answers that you may feel you have to provide. Although it is true that your child may not understand the full meaning of adoption until they are 4 to 6 years old, it is important to incorporate adoption language and stories into your daily life.

Many parents are concerned about how to respond to their child's questions about adoption. How you respond will have a great impact on maintaining an honest and open relationship with your child. It is important for you to examine your own feelings behind your response as some of the child's questions may trigger intense emotions as you try to formulate an answer to the child's question. (Moore, 2004)

Some guidelines are:

- ***Be truthful:*** Honesty builds a sense of security and enhances trust.

- ***Be age appropriate:*** Give explanations that your child will understand.

- ***Show love and respect:*** Include loving expressions in your response.

- ***Limit your answer to what has been asked:*** you do not need to provide an encyclopaedia of answers that your child may not want to know. An example is: Q: Where do babies come from? The answer need not explain the entire reproductive process.

- ***Use positive language:*** Talk about birth parents, previous foster carers, and birth relatives in a non-judgemental, positive way. This does not mean that you should hide negative aspects of certain events in the child's life. It means that even though you may be angry with the birth mother for your perceptions of how she treated the child, you should still present the positive aspects of the birth parent(s).

- ***Use humour:*** It is all right to laugh and enjoy your discussions with your child.

- ***Reassure:*** It is very important for you to help your child to feel safe and that it is a part of life to discuss adoption. Help your child to understand that it is OK to talk about adoption.

Examples of Questions:

- ***Why did you adopt me?***
- ***What were my birth parents' first, middle and surnames?***
- ***Are they still alive and where do they live?***
- ***Why did I have to live with a foster carer?***
- ***Where was I born?***
- ***What religion were my birth parents?***
- ***Do I look like my birth parents?***
- ***Do I have any other brothers and sisters that I don't know about?***
- ***What should I call my birth parents?***
- ***Do they love me?***
- ***Why did my birth parents give me up?***
- ***When can I search for my birth parents?***
- ***Why didn't anyone tell me about ….?***
- ***Will they come and see me?***
- ***Will they come and take me away?***
- ***Was I a naughty baby?***
- ***Will you give me away?***

Again, you may wish to prepare to answer these questions. The longer you wait to gather information, the harder it will be to locate some of the answers. As an adoptive parent, it is crucial that you acknowledge that your child has a history and that another family existed at another time. You will need to work at addressing differences and work to bridge the gap to find a balance for your child.

How to Explain the Adoption to Other People

Whilst it may seem like a small task, telling other people about the adoption can have great meaning for you, your family and your child. How you tell others will really depend upon what the situation is, whom the person is, how your child feels about it, how you feel about it and what you choose to share. (McCordy, 1998)

If your child was transracially adopted, the topic will probably present itself. You may encounter insensitive questions, which, in fact, present the opportunity for you to express your delight and pride in your child and siblings.

It is probable that you would want to tell professionals that work with you and your child about the adoption if it hasn't been done already. It is important to discuss the adoption with educators especially teachers regarding lesson planning so that your child is not singled out.

You may be faced with meeting new people in social setting who may ask general questions about where your child came from or general family questions that may be difficult to answer without some thought.

Most questions can be answered in a matter of fact tone of voice without being defensive. Children will notice if a question upsets you and it is important for you to teach the child to cope with difficult social situations by planning your answers individually and as a family.

Children may ask your child:
"Are they your real parents?

The answer is:
"They are now."

As you and your family become more comfortable in addressing others' questions, you will discover that the definition of your family will become clearer.

How to Succeed as a Parent

The term, "adoptive parent" lends itself to a lot of confusion for you, the parent. Keep in mind that parenting any child is a challenging task and that adoptive parents are "parents" first and foremost. You have committed to grow and change as a person in order to nurture your child and help them to grow. Here are some examples of successful parenting tips compiled by other adoptive parents:

- ***Advocate for your child:*** Be willing to work hard to secure resources and answers for your child.

- ***Resourcefulness:*** Seek and accept help. Allow others into your family system to offer assistance. Educate yourself about what information sources are available to you (books, tapes, DVDs, workshops and networking with other parents)

- ***Tolerate negative feelings:*** Don't be hard on yourself about feeling "down" at times. Find the strength to go and find support if you need it.

- ***Flexibility:*** Share the responsibility of parenting with others. Look to family members to help solve problems. Maintain flexible expectations of your child and yourself.

- ***Ability to delay your own gratification:*** Recognise that you may have to give and give again without receiving in return. You may not be able to recognise the product of your hard work until your child becomes an adult.

- ***Tolerance of rejection:*** Develop your ability to withstand behaviour from your child that may often be hurtful, angry, and rejecting. Realize that your child's bond with their birth family, foster carers and others is not a rejection of you.

- ***Maintain your sense of humour:*** Use humour to cope with stress. Remember it takes more facial muscles to frown than to smile.

- ***Entitlement:*** Remember that your child is truly your child. The more you develop as a family, the more you reinforce your role as your child's parent.

- ***Take care of yourself:*** It is very important to take care of yourself physically and emotionally. Take breaks and personal time away from the demands of your child by asking family and friends for help.

- ***Be comfortable in your role as a parent:*** Learn to dive directions and provide structure for your child. Learn to anticipate behaviour and provide praise or affection. Learn not to be deterred by a child's protest or withdrawal.

Common/Core Issues in Adoption

Throughout the lifespan of an adopted person, there are key issues that tend to repeat as the family grows and develops as a unit, as the child develops as an individual, as sibling relationships develop and as you, the parent, grow into your roles and relationships.

Listed below are some issues, which, other people who have experienced the lifelong process of adoption have, in one way or another said were important to know. *(Eldridge, 1999)*

It is important to recognise that adoption is actually different emotionally than forming a family biologically. All children struggle with the process of mastering their identity, the losses they have had to cope with, and their new role in a new family.

Once the child arrives in your family, you as the parent face a dual role not only as a new parent but also as a new adoptive parent who must help your child to cope with specific issues. It is important to recognise the special needs of your child and to balance whether or not the child's needs are related to the ages and stages of growing up, to adoption or to other problems that may arise.

Often, an issue that many adoptive parents grapple with is that the child has a history with their biological family part of which may be unmet needs, abuse, confusion, as well as memories of happier times with the birth family. These feelings can result in a wide range of social, emotional or cognitive challenges. By recognising these facts and incorporating your child's heritage into your own family, the child will have a sense of belonging and a secure base from which to cope with their history. *(Reitz and Watson, 1992.)*

All parents experience ambivalence and lowered self-confidence at times. You may even have lingering doubts about whether you will later regret bringing a child into the family that was not born to you.

At the core of the adoption experience the issues are: **entitlement, claiming, unmatched expectations, family integration, loss, grief, bonding, attachment, identity formation, and mastery of these issues.** Brief explanations of the issues above will follow.

Entitlement

Adoptive families struggle with entitlement—whether or not they have a "right "to one another. There are two forms of entitlement, legal and emotional. The legal right was decreed in the adoption order. The emotional right is much more complex and takes time to develop. Until this "right" develops sometimes, adoptive parents may hold back in their commitment and responses to the child especially regarding discipline. As well, the child may hold back commitment with responses that maintain distance. *(Reitz and Watson, Prew, Suter, and Carrington, 1990)*

Other factors may inhibit your sense of entitlement such as the possible guilt that you may be taking the child from the birth parents or may fear that the birth parents may suddenly return and reclaim your child. You may have some lingering feelings about infertility or may fear that the child will search for and find the birth parents and will reject the ties to your family.

Sometimes children, particularly those who were abused and/or neglected, may wonder if they are entitled to families who will love them and care for them. If they feel unlovable, their behaviour may be a way of acting out the belief that they do not deserve a family.

Claiming

The process of claiming is the way the adoptive family comes to accept the adopted child as a full-fledged member of the family and how the parent comes to accept the adopted child as theirs. *(Reitz and Watson, 1990)*

There are a number of ways that families claim their child. Sometimes, the parents may add a middle name that was a family name to the child's existing name. The child often takes the surname of the family and that identifies the child as belonging to that particular family.

Sharing pictures of the child or having a new family portrait is another way to claim the child. As well family photo albums with extended family members reinforces acknowledgement of the child as a member of the family.

Another claiming activity is to tell your child about your family history, traditions, and rituals and making your child's adoption a part of it. New rituals can be created by sending announcements, having a party, holding a family gathering or sending cards with a name change. It is important to seek the input of the child in planning new rituals in order to validate the feelings of the child in the process.

Unmatched Expectations

Both you and your child have expectations regarding the new relationship that you are forming. Sometimes the expectations do not meet up. This can cause difficulties for an adoptive family particularly in the first stages of the adoption process. Because the parent and the child are emotionally tied to the adoption, both expect to get something out of the investment.

It is not unusual for families to ask for professional help to sort out these differences by identifying unmatched expectations and by helping the family to mourn the expectations that cannot be met as well as search for other ways to help needs to be met.
(Reitz and Watson)

Family Integration

The cohesiveness of your existing family unit may be challenged by the entry of an adopted child into the unit because this upsets the family balance. Each family member will have to adjust to the change and the corresponding shift in expectations.

The main challenges for the family are: 1) negotiating numerous issues defined by the [birth family] and other family systems [foster carers] that have been a part of the pre-adoptive placement, and 2) blending into one family system. *(Reitz, Watson and Groze, 1992)*

With the change of a family system, there is change in the patterns of everyday life. Formal and informal rules of family living and new family roles must be developed over months and years must be suddenly altered. New patterns of family interaction must be developed. This does not happen easily or quickly.

Adults, it is easier to understand the need for change but children in the household may find the accommodation difficult. Your own birth children are likely to feel resentment.
Other adopted children might feel threatened, as the memories of each child's own history is triggered.

Another problem that arises can be when an older child resists attempts at integration into the family. Older children, even if they are well prepared for adoption and wanting to be adopted, can enter an adoptive situation with a past history of living in family systems that did not work. Many times, the older child may perceive the new family in light of past experience and their behaviours may be the same ones they learned in that system in order to survive.

Please remember that you are not just adopting a child but rather a whole new family system. If there is direct contact with the family of origin this becomes truer for the child who is trying to balance the integration of the new system with the old system.

Separation, Loss and Grief

All loss is painful. Each loss can trigger feelings associated with past losses. Sometimes, unresolved issues can become more observable when new losses occur. **Separation** from meaningful relationships is a form of loss that is the most obvious in adoption. **Grief** is the process that people experience in order to recover from a loss. Other types of losses can be: the loss of child-bearing ability, moving house, death of foster carers or siblings, loss of indirect or direct contact with extended family members, or loss of control.

Adoption related loss is viewed differently by society than loss related to death. There are no rituals such as a funeral or wake. Often there is no recognition that there have been losses so friends and families do not always know how to help.

Loss of control is one of the more common feelings of loss associated with adoption. Adults who adopt must cope with the loss of the biological child they did not have. The adopted child must cope with the loss of birth parents, siblings, extended family members, and meaningful foster carer. Any other loss or threat of even the smallest separation can be overwhelming for the child. Even a child adopted in infancy can experience loss when they begin to sense that something is different.

It is important to be aware of the stages of grief as parents help children move through the healing process related to adoption. The stages are: shock, denial, anger bargaining, sadness/despair and acceptance. Remember that grief does not proceed through the above stages in order. New losses can only be worked through in the context of stability and usually done with someone else's help. Even though loss is painful, it can serve to help you and your child to come together on common ground. *(Bourguignon and Watson, Kubler-Ross)*

Bonding and Attachment

Bonding and attachment are areas of great importance in an adoptive relationship. Some professionals use the terms interchangeably to describe the relationship between parents and children. Research suggests that bonding is the unique "biological, genetic and emotional tie between children and their birth mother during pregnancy and birth. All babies have a bond to their birth mother" (Levy, Orlans, 1998 Verrier, 1993 et al).

"***Attachment*** is learned after birth" *(Levy, Orlans, 1998)* "Attachment is an effective bond characterised by a tendency to seek and maintain proximity to a specific figure, particularly while under stress." *(Bowlby, 1970)* Attachment is also the lasting psychological tie between two people and develops in the context of interaction.

Infants develop attachment through interaction with caregivers. If the caregiver is responsive and accessible, the infant develops secure attachment. As the child grows, basic needs must be met by caregivers in order to develop secure attachment. The first three years of a child's life are critical.

Jean Piaget, theorised that, during the time between 0 to 8 months, the infant learns to recognise the caregiver's voice, differentiate the caregiver from others, smile at the caregiver, and visually track the caregiver. John Bowlby, attachment theorist, formulated that attachment develops between 8 months of age when reactions to strangers begins to emerge. Children begin to show preferences of primary caregivers but begin to explore the environment. As children learn to distinguish themselves from their caregiver, they learn to tolerate separation form the caregiver. *(Fahlberg, 1991, et al)*

When infants are adopted, attachment proceeds in the same manner as birthed infants. However, for a child who is older and who has experienced poor responses from caregivers, attachment may be interrupted. The child may not learn to make meaningful attachments due to poor parenting or multiple disruptions in attachments. *(Fahlberg, 1991 et al)*

Symptoms seen in children with attachment difficulties generally fall in the areas of conscience development, impulse control, self-esteem,, interpersonal interactions, expression and recognition of child's own and others' feelings and a variety of developmental difficulties. (Fahlberg et al) Sometimes serious attachment disorders can develop and often require the attention of a psychologist or other mental health professional.

Specific symptoms *(Levy and Orlans, 1998)* of serious attachment problems might be:

- **Lack of ability to feel or to give true affection**
- **Self-destructive behaviours**
- **Cruelty to others-siblings animals**
- **Lack of trust**
- **Stealing gorging or hoarding**
- **Lack of long term childhood friends**
- **Extreme control battles**
- **Demand for affection but lack of depth in relationship**
- **Phoniness, superficiality.**

It is important for adoptive parents to learn about what areas the child needs to develop and to provide sensitive responses to those unmet needs.

Identity Formation

Adoption can have a profound impact upon the formation of the child's identity. Each person develops an identity or "vision of oneself" on conscious and unconscious levels. This is developed through our experiences and interactions with other people and making conscious choices about who and what one will be.

While we all experience changes in our identities, most identity formation takes place around age three or four, and again in adolescence. Most children develop a sense of the family they belong to and have an idea of the **boundaries** between that family and the rest of the world. *(Bowen, Minuchen)*

You can support your adopted child's struggle to form an identity by helping to build his or her self-esteem. The issues of loss, self-worth and identity converge at the point of an adopted person's interest in learning about the birth parents. *(Brodzinsky, et al)* Openness about the adoption and information about your child's birth parents will play a key role in helping the child come to terms with his or her identity.

Mastery and Control

Most people develop a sense of personal power, control and mastery over situations in their lives. Adoptive parents and children have usually had numerous experiences that threaten their sense of control or mastery.

Infants and children usually have no control or input into decisions made on their behalf. Children removed from birth parents in situations of abuse and neglect have often had decisions made that they did not understand. They may have had no voice in whether or not they were to be placed for adoption and were not likely to have participated in the selection process for a new family. *(Prew, Suter, and Carrington)*

Many times, adoptive children may engage in power struggles with adoptive parents and other authority figures in an attempt to regain control over their lives.

Adoptive parents, whose sense of mastery has been diminished by the adoption process in which decisions were made by social workers or the court system, may feel helpless. Sometimes the response to feeling helpless is to become overprotective or controlling to the extreme.

Life Story Work

As an adoptive parent, you will often hear the term “life story book” used interchangeably with the term “life story work”. To clarify, “life story work” is the process and journey that a child takes to construct a story about his or her life prior to being adopted and coming to be a part of your family. The end result of this process is often a book, treasure box or other tool that helps the child to recall memories as they grow into adolescence and adulthood.

Children and young people who have been separated from their family of origin, whether this is temporarily or permanently, may not remember significant things and events about their own life and are likely to be denied access to childhood memories through the sometimes abrupt process of entering the social care system. Life story work is effective for children and young people to help them to sort out a disrupted upbringing in multiple homes. Life story work provides an opportunity for fostered and adopted children to know about their past, clarify past experiences and develop a valuable record about themselves.

When children are removed from their families of origin it is essential that they be provided with as much information as possible. Without this, children are not able to make sense of their past, adjust to the present, or move on to the future. Life story work is often dependent on the co-operation of the birth family and it is important for social workers to provide the birth family with the opportunity to give information as it also helps them to be able to move the child into his or her new life with the adoptive family. The process can encourage a ‘mourning process’, which is essential if families are to ‘let go’ and progress.

Photos, pictures, drawings and personal mementos will become significant part of the child’s own life story which can take the form of a book or other tool as mentioned earlier.. This technique gives children a structured way of talking about themselves that helps to understand, accept who they are and build a sense of self worth. According to his or her age, it is hoped that the child will contribute to the process, with their primary carers supported and guided to enhance talking about and honouring the child’s history. This process in turn creates a safe place within the adoptive family for the child to be able to discuss his or her feelings about the adoption and encourages attachment to the adoptive parents.

Many times, life story tools contain the following information or be organised into the following categories:

- **Facts and Figures**
- **Past and Present**
- **People and Places**
- **Likes and Dislikes**
- **Hopes and Fears**
- **Wishes and Dreams &**
- **Contacts**

Stories are vehicles of identity. We shape, transform, defend, and pass on our identities through our stories.

Problems happen to every person in this world. On the day we are born, we are taken away from what is comforting and what is certain. As we progress through our lives more problems emerge that we must face.

Every person’s experiences create many different stories in their life. These stories may be separate from each other, but often they occur at the same time or even overlap. It is even possible that the same event creates many different stories in a person’s life. No single story can summarize a person’s life, and so many stories and examination of these stories is required to help understand the person telling them *(White, Dulwich Centre)* It is very possible that troughout the child’s life into adulthood, the telling and retelling of the life story will occur until the child comes to closure or resolves the issues within the story.

Sometimes it is difficult to know if your child needs to work on his or her life story. If your child is asking a lot of questions about his or her past, it is likely that he or she has some issues that may need to be revisited. If you have questions or need help to determine whether or not your child could benefit from additional work, the adoption support team at your local authority can help.

Predictable Crisis Periods for Adoptive Families

There are many crisis periods that can occur at various times in your adoptive family's life experience. Among these are: transitional periods or times of significant change, the teen years, and major life events in adulthood. Crisis period are different for every child and every family. Some children may display pronounced behaviour changes whilst other may display very subtle changes. Not all children experience crisis and it is important to keep that in mind. Listed below are some common periods of crisis defined by adoptive families. *(Brodzinsky & Schecter, 1990)*

- ***Pre-placement period:*** This is also called the introduction period. You and your child may experience a great deal of anxiety during this time because of the impending change. Many times families overlook the stress that is related to this period because they are looking forward to the placement.
- ***Post-placement period/honeymoon period:*** Because you have had to redefine many of the relationships in your family, most families are on their best behaviour during the beginning of the placement. Many of the fantasies about how the family would be will end and your child will begin to test your commitment as a family. This is sometimes called the end of the honeymoon.
- ***Application for the adoption order:*** When parents apply for the adoption order children may become anxious about when the adoption will be final, whether or not the adoption will actually take place, what the adoption means in terms of contact with birth parents as well as worry about agreeing to be adopted. You may see some of your child's challenging behaviour increase so that he or she tests the limit of your commitment.
- ***Legal finalisation:*** When the adoption becomes finalised, you may see a re-emergence of challenging behaviour due to some of the anxieties listed above. If the child has been required to formally consent to their adoption, it may trigger feelings of conflict within the child about loyalty to you and to the birth family.
- ***Major transitions:*** Any time there is a major change such as moving house, changing schools even if the transitions are positive, your child may experience confusion about feelings of loss and may often resort to old problematic behaviour.
- ***Birthdays:*** This is a time when children may be reminded of birth parents, foster carers and other previous caregivers.
- ***Mothers/Father's Day:*** Your child may engage in extensive thoughts about their identity and birth family.
- ***Entering school:*** This is often when the first family crisis occurs. When the child enters a new school or changes classroom routine feeling can emerge due to pressure from peers and teachers to explain who he/she is, where he/she lives, who his/her family is, Children are often confronted with innocent questions from others that often create a tremendous amount of stress on a child who is still trying to understand the answers to these questions.
- ***Comments from peers:*** Sometimes children are confronted with questions about adoption in a hurtful manner.
- ***Adolescence:*** This is a traditional time to establish one's identity and most adoptive children have complicated identity issues. Children not only try to adapt to the physical and emotional angst of being teenagers, but also with feelings about past separations and loss.
- ***Adult Phase:*** Other life events such as selecting a partner, building a family, choosing a career, or relocating can create problems for a person with separation experiences in early childhood. Crisis can also be caused by lack of information about heredity and may lead to a search for birth relatives.
- ***Death of parents:*** Death of a parent can trigger a search for a biological family member if the adopted person has not done so earlier. Sometimes this is due to the need to replace lost relationships and sometimes it is an effort to resolve old concerns without being disloyal to the adoptive parent.

Below is a list of Adoption Adjustment Tasks written by David Brodzinsky, Clinical Psychologist, in the book **The Psychology of Adoption.**

Adoption Adjustment Tasks

Infancy	Transition to new home Develop new attachments
Toddlers	Learn about birth and reproduction Learn initial information about adoption Recognize differences in physical appearance
Middle childhood	Understand meaning of being adopted. Search for answers regarding origin and reason for relinquishment Cope with physical differences from family members Cope with stigma of adoption Cope with peer reaction to being adopted Cope with adoption related loss
Adolescence	Integrate adoption into one's sense of identity Cope with racial identity Cope with physical differences Resolve family romance fantasy Consider searching for birth family
Young Adulthood	Understand implications of adoption as they relate to self-growth and intimacy with others Begin emotional and informational search Adjust to parenthood in light of one' s own relinquishment Face one's unknown genetic history Continue to cope with adoption related loss
Middle adulthood	Further explore the implications of adoption as it relates to the aging self Further consider search for birth relatives
Late Adulthood	Finally resolve adoption in the context of a life view

Other Triggers for a Family Crisis

Conflict in Expectations

Some families are shocked by the degree of unpleasant behaviour exhibited by their teenager. Sometimes, the behaviours are antisocial, destructive, defiant and oppositional. Other times the behaviour seems to be immature, delayed or withdrawn. Because the family had a specific fantasy regarding what the new member of the family would be like, most people have difficulty coping with the new challenges.

Parents should ask themselves:

- **Is the teen behaving the same as other teens?**
- **Have I asked for help?**

Family Stresses

Every family must cope with everyday pressures. Sometimes stress takes the form of divorce, death, or differences in adult development versus child development. For example, teenagers often experience the same difficulty with identity as adults who experience midlife crisis. The behaviour manifests itself differently, but the difficulty is the same. Sometimes, adults blame marital problems on children with special needs when the problem may actually be unrelated to the child.

Parents need to ask themselves:

- **Is this problem about me or about the child?**
- **Have I been taking good care of myself?**
- **Have I asked for advice about this particular problem?**

Separation and Attachment

Adopted children have had to meet new families and form new attachments. This has had a definite impact upon how the child relates to the adopted family. How the child has had to experience separation has a profound impact on the way the child views himself or herself in relation to the new family. If the child has resolved many of the issues related to the grief and loss of the first family, then the child's ability to attach will not be as likely to be the subject of crisis later in the life of the family.

Parents should ask themselves:

- **What have I done to be sure that my child understands his or her life story?**
- **How have I helped my child to cope with the stages of mourning his or her past life?**
- **How recently have I talked about these**

Mental Health Difficulties

Sometimes, children who have come to a family from the looked after system often behave in a way that causes concern for the family. Because the family is unsure about this behaviour, it is easy to assume that the child may be severely disturbed. Other times, a child who is seriously disturbed may need help and the family attributes the behaviour to the child's past. For parents, it is difficult to know the answers. Here are some examples of extreme behaviour that may require professional attention for mental health issues.

- **The child is intentionally cruel to animals by beating, severely injuring or killing the animal.**
- **The child defecates in his or her bed and often plays with the faeces.**
- **The child is self-injurious to the point of cutting skin or body parts.**
- **The child exhibits odd behaviour such as talking to people who are not there in an extreme manner. This is not the same as an imaginary friend.**
- **The child attempts suicide.**
- **The child spends playtime flapping his or her hands or banging his or her head against a wall.**

If your child does any of these things, he or she may need to be seen by a mental health professional, paediatrician or GP as soon as possible. It may help to ask other parents or professionals to validate your observations of the child. If you do need mental health services for your child, it is important that you establish a good relationship with the clinician that helps your child. Ask yourself if you are firm in your commitment to the child, or is it possible that your own stress may be influencing the perception you have of your child.

Previous History of Sexual Abuse

Adopters who are caring for a child who has a history of sexual abuse must learn what they can do to help a child heal. While sexual abuse is often a taboo topic, it is important to understand facts about sexual abuse as opposed to myths. It is a common myth that children who have been sexually abused become perpetrators of abuse. Research indicates that one in three children are sexually abused in the United Kingdom. Most of the reported victims of sexual abuse are female. However, most convicted perpetrators of sexual abuse are male. It is most likely that a child who has been sexually abused in the past can receive help to resolve sexual abuse issues and to learn to trust again.

It is important for parents to be aware of the differences between average sexual development and sexualised behaviour.

As parents, you must reflect upon your own feelings about how to parent a child with sexual abuse difficulties. It is possible that the child may have been sexually abused but did not feel safe to disclose the abuse until after the adoption order took place. Therefore, the parent must decide how they will cope with the situation. It is important to set appropriate limits with your child about sexual behaviour whether or not the child has a confirmed sexual abuse history.

Guidelines for Coping with Crisis Periods

How you decide to cope with crisis will depend upon you and your family. During the crisis, the way you cope will teach your children how to deal with difficult periods in life. Helping your family to identify the problem, the feelings and to plan strategies for coping are important tasks to functioning well in life.

It is true that there are times when we all need help. Part of identifying a solution to the crisis is being able to be strong enough and to allow yourself to be vulnerable enough to ask for help. Help can come in many forms. Some families have a strong network of support such as friends and community members such as religious leaders.

Other forms of support may be educators, social workers, school psychologists, or other resources. Sometimes talking with other adoptive parents can be helpful. Some experienced adoptive parents volunteer time with private charitable organisations in order to provide support to newer adoptive parents.

Remember that you do not have to cope with a crisis alone. It is often helpful for you to keep a record of your observations and feelings so that you may read over it at a later time and reflect. This can aid in identifying the actual problem so that you can find a solution to it.

Try not to over react to problems that seem overwhelming. It may be that after some thought; the problem is more easily solved. Likewise, minimising problems can also complicate matters. It is important to be aware of your own coping style when under stress.

When the Adoption is Threatened

Sometimes, the unthinkable can happen. Some families find that it is impossible to cope with the difficulties that extend beyond daily stress. Examples of extenuating adoption circumstances are:

- **The child is self-destructive or violent beyond the capacity of the family to care for the child.**
- **Episodes of extreme behaviour are becoming more and more frequent or intense and professional help does not seem to improve the situation.**
- **Efforts at obtaining help have been repeatedly unsuccessful.**
- **Parents believe that they may harm the child in an attempt to gain control of a situation.**
- **Other child-protection matters arise within the family.**

It may be that you will sometimes consider placing your child elsewhere or ending the adoption especially as the teen years progress. You must be absolutely sure that you are not making this type of decision in reaction to a crisis. It is imperative that you seek help from your adoption support worker if you are thinking about disruption so that appropriate measures can be taken to support both you and your child should this occur.

Remember also, that it can be very damaging to the child and to your relationship with the child if you threaten disruption as a means of disciplining the child's challenging behaviour. When disruption is threatened as a means of discipline, a sense of mistrust is created between the child and the parent. It is difficult for adopted children to trust in the first place as is discussed earlier in this booklet. Therefore, to threaten this type of result to a child, reinforces the child's expectation that the relationship cannot be trusted.

Working with Adoption Professionals

From the beginning of the adoption process, you will experience working with many adoption professionals ranging from social workers to educators and doctors to panel and others. It can seem overwhelming and frustrating at times when you are trying to develop your own parenting style. It may seem that decisions are made for your child without regard to what you feel is best for your child.

It is very important to remember that all of the professionals involved share a common thread of interest with you and that is your child and his or her needs. There will be professionals that you do not particularly agree with when it comes to raising your child. However, it is important to be able to use that professional as a resource to learn where to find out more information about a wide range of topics.

Throughout the life of the adoption, you may need to access adoption support services for information about your child's needs at a variety of levels. Among these are: finding records, direct contact facilitation, post-box contact, information regarding your child's adoption support plan, financial support, parent networks and therapeutic services.

Hopefully, you will be able to establish professional relationships with your adoption social worker and adoption support worker so that you may feel supported through your journey forward with your child and family.

When Your Child Wants to Search

Drs. Brodzinsky and Schecter in **Being Adopted**, say “In our experience, all adoptees engage in a search process. It may not be a literal search but it is a meaningful search nonetheless. It begins when the child first asks, ‘Why did it happen?’”

As your child reaches adolescence, he or she may express the need to search for birth relatives if direct contact has not taken place. As discussed earlier in this booklet, teenagers are usually struggling with identity issues. If your child feels that he or she does not have the answers to some of the questions in their mind, the child will express a need to search for the answers and a search for birth relatives is often a logical starting place for the adolescent.

Because adopted adolescents often feel helpless when thinking about being separated (which, incidentally, is a primary developmental task of young adults). It makes sense that they would need to exercise personal power at this time to search for answers about the earlier separation in their life in order to gain mastery over embarking on an independent life for themselves.

If your adolescent expresses a desire to search for birth parents, you can contact an adoption support worker who can try to access files for more information regarding your child’s past history. The information in the files would be shared with you so that you could share the information with your child. Sometimes, included in the life storybook is a later life letter explaining why your child was adopted. This is not always the case but if you have such a letter, the time to share it with your child is when they express a need for more information. There are also adoption support services that provide counselling for families and children who may be experiencing anxiety over the search process.

Search Tips for Adoptive Parents

- **Take your child’s request to search seriously. Most children have thought about the desire to search for a lengthy time before expressing it.**
- **Decide with your child what the best course of action is. Your child cannot access records without your consent so it is important to work together to decide what is best for the child.**
- **Try to be aware of your own feelings and how they might affect the decision making process. Some parents feel threatened by the child’s request to search and as a result hinder the search without talking it over with the child.**
- **Try to help your child sort out the reason for wanting to search. Is it because of recent upheavals in the family such as divorce or a sibling moving out of the home to go to university or to start a job? Is it because the child needs to know answers about his or her past? Is it because the child needs to complete the grief cycle?**
- **Do not be afraid to ask for help. Sometimes it is valuable to have an objective third party.**

Contact: Direct and Indirect

During preparation for the adoption process, you have probably heard the terms direct and indirect contact. It is most likely that you have seen a written contact plan as you read your plan for introductions and again as your application for an adoption order was submitted to the court.

Many parents do not have a chance to think about the implications of contact during the initial stages of the adoption. Some adopters experience a wide range of feelings about contact and some admit to feeling a little intimidated by the whole process of having contact with the child's birth family.

As an adoptive parent, it is important for you to be able to talk openly with your child about contact. Most adopted children seem to be very concerned about how their adopted parents will react to contact and sometimes go to great lengths not to talk about their feelings regarding contact because of the loyalty they feel. Some children are confused by contact yet need the information provided during contact in order to form an identity.

There are different types of contact with different members of the birth family. There is direct contact in which the child and the adopted parents have a face-to-face meeting (usually twice a year) with the birth parent(s). Sometimes a child will have direct contact with birth siblings or grandparents.

Direct contact can be arranged by a social worker from the local authority or intermediary agency and often takes place at a neutral venue such as a family activity centre or other venue that provides an activity. When adoptive parents begin to feel confident to attend contact without a social worker present, then contact becomes just another part of the life of the family. If direct contact occurs with birth siblings who have been adopted or grandparents, some adoptive parents make the arrangements for contact themselves.

Indirect contact means that the contact is not face-to-face. Indirect contact can take place in the form of cards or letters sent to the child via post-box services. In rare instances, telephone contact can be made with members of the birth family. Usually, plans for contact are discussed during the introduction process and again when the application for an adoption order is made.

Top Ten Tips for Contact

Here are top tips for adopters involved in letterbox contact.

- **Try hard to send the letter in the agreed month. This can avoid raising anxiety for members of birth families who actively engage in maintaining contact.**

- **Don't be disheartened if you get no response - sending the contact letter is still important for your children, particularly in the future when they may choose to access their records. They will see you have done your very best to maintain contact on their behalf.**

- **Always remember to quote your PAA number when writing in - it saves lots of time!**

- **Date and sign your letters using your first names.**

- **Keep us informed of any change of address, telephone number or email address - this helps ensure we can contact you if the need arises and avoids letters going astray.**

- **Tell/involve your child in the letter box exchange at a level appropriate to their age and level of understanding. As children get older they may want to contribute to your letter. Parents often need to take the initiative with this because children may not know what to say. Because they do not talk about their birth families does not mean they are not thinking about them. It may also help you to open up discussions with your child about his/her past.**

- **Some adopters may struggle knowing what to say in their letter, especially as their children get older. Birth family members may be interested to know something about the child's achievements, hobbies, taste in music, clothes, films, favourite electronic games etc. If it helps to discuss some aspects of letter writing you can always contact us.**

- **When letters are exchanged on an annual basis it can be helpful to make reference to the last letter from the birth family in your next letter. Not only can this be reassuring to the birth family member to know that letters have been received but ultimately it gives some continuity to the contact for your child.**

- **Some adopters keep a note of activities, outings, events and anecdotes throughout the year so when it comes to sending the letter, the main content of it is all there in one place.**

- **Last but not least, don't hesitate to seek advice/share concerns with the adoption support team, especially if you have any other issues. Sometimes it helps just to talk things through.**

Adoption Letterbox

Adoption Letterbox is a service provided by the local authority and was established to help families maintain confidentiality when contacting each other through indirect means such as sending cards, letters, photographs or drawings People wish to exchange information about that child for a variety of reasons. Some of the reasons are:

- **Birth relatives may wish to have information about the child's health and happiness, how they are doing at school, hobbies and interests. They may also wish to share important information about their own lives such as getting married or the birth of new children or death of family members.**
- **The adoptive parents may wish to have information from the birth relatives that would help the child understand the reasons for their adoption or to find out about family medical history.**
- **An exchange of information can be beneficial to an adopted child by helping the child come to terms with what has happened, provide reassurance on how birth families are getting on and it can enable a child to maintain links with birth relatives. An adopted child often wants to know about their roots and to make sense of their earlier experiences. It can also help the child to know that their parents acknowledge the importance of the birth family for the child**

Letterbox can only work if all parties cooperate to provide information for the child. Sometimes it is very difficult to participate in letterbox as it does not happen in the "here and now". Some adoptive parents may feel angry or intimidated by birth relatives behaviour as the may not understand the birth relatives circumstances.

How Letterbox Works

Letterbox agreements are signed by all the parties.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. Once it has been checked by the letterbox coordinator, the information is sent on to the adoptive parents or to the birth family. A covering letter will identify the child by their PAA number and will refer to the adoptive parents and birth family by their first names. Surnames are not used.

A letter of acknowledgement will be sent by the Post-Box Coordinator confirming that your correspondence has been received and that it will be passed on. A copy of all letters will be kept.

Before sending on any information, the Letterbox Coordinator will write to the birth relative to check that they are still at the same address and that they wish to receive the correspondence.

If no response is received, the information will be kept at the Letterbox so that the birth relative can access it at any time in the future. The same is true for the adoptive parent when receiving information from the birth relative.

Working with Birth Parents

Many adoptive parents have anxiety about working with birth parents through the contact process. Feelings can include anger, pity, guilt, fear and threat. It is very important for your child's sake to be honest with yourself about your feelings and learn to adapt your anxieties to achieve a positive outcome.

You have most likely been asked to meet with the birth parent or parents in order to ask any questions about your child's history or to help you come to terms with your own feelings about your child's historical circumstances. In order to secure future direct contact plans, you may have been asked to consider the birth parent's needs as well as your child's needs. How you manage with working with birth parents brings the message to your child that you can create a safe kind of openness in which your child is wholly accepted for who he or she has been and who they will become with your help and guidance. How you cope with this challenge will teach your child that difficulties can be managed in a way that is healthy for all concerned.

You will most likely have participated in a planning process for direct contact prior to the adoption order. Remember that sometimes over the years, your child's feelings can intensify or wane away as they journey through their lives. As well, the birth parent commitment to direct contact may change. Your own feelings may change. It is imperative to consider the entire adoption triangle in order to achieve the best of all possible scenarios for your child. If you need assistance to manage contact in the context of mediating difficult issues regarding contact, you may wish to contact your adoption support worker.

Adoption Support Services

According to the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the local authority adoption service must include the provision of adoption support services available in their area to meet the needs of people affected by adoption.

Adoption support services are defined as:

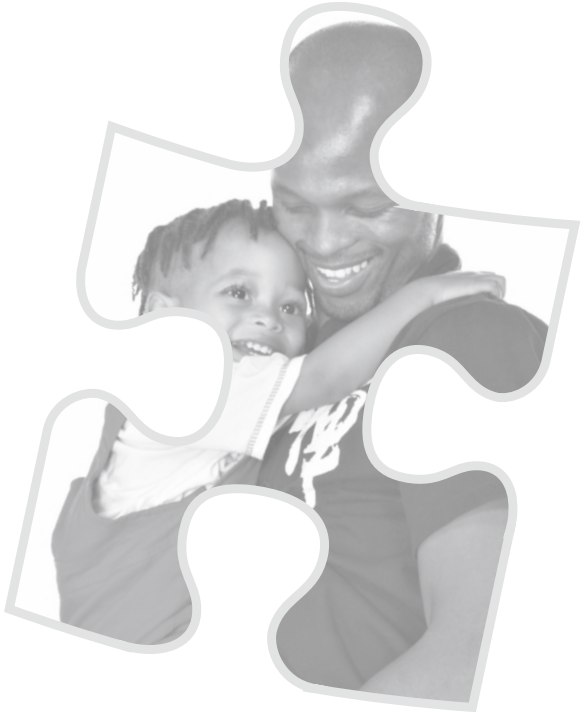
- **Financial services**
- **Services to enable groups of adoptive children, adoptive parents and birth parents or former guardians of an adoptive child to discuss matters relating to adoption.**
- **Contact mediation between an adoptive child and birth parents, birth siblings or relatives, former guardians or related persons.**
- **Therapeutic services for adoptive families.**
- **Assistance for the purpose of ensuring the continuance of the relationship between an adoptive child and his/her adoptive parent, including training for adoptive parents to meet any special needs of the child and respite care**
- **Assistance where disruption of an adoptive placement or adoption arrangement following the making of an adoption order has occurred or is in danger of occurring.**
- **Counselling, advice and information services**

The local authority currently serves adopted children, adoptive parents, birth child of adoptive parents, birth parents or guardians of adoptive child, relative of adoptive child, intercountry adoptive children and parents, birth siblings of adopted children, prospective adopters, adopted adults and their relatives.

Currently, Hertfordshire has adoption support social workers that assess adoption support needs for people affected by adoption as listed above. Examples of services offered are:

- **In-home counselling and life story work**
- **Therapeutic services to help with attachment difficulties and challenging behaviour.**
- **Birth parent counselling**
- **Adoptive mentorship**
- **Adult search and reunion**
- **Letterbox services**
- **Training**
- **Support groups**
- **Advice and support regarding transcultural and intercountry issues. Intermediary services**

People wishing to be assessed for adoption support needs should contact the adoption support office in Hertfordshire. The Adoption Support Duty number is: **01438 844488**



Glossary of Related Terms

Abuse- Harm inflicted upon a person through physical, verbal, emotional or sexual means.

Adoption Support- Services provided to adoptive families to enhance the lifelong adoption process.

Adoption Support Plan- Written plan based upon child and family needs used to identify services.

Adoption Order- The legal finalisation of the adoption of a child.

Adoption Panel- Interdisciplinary panel that reviews and approves potential adopters and potential matches.

Adopted Adult Services- Services for adults over 18 and members of birth families who wish to explore the possibility of contacting each other.

Anti-Social Behaviour- Behaviour well beyond the limits of acceptable behaviour for most children, including, truanting, fighting, not responding to affection.

Attachment Difficulties- Inability to develop specific emotional connections with other people.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder- a lifelong disorder that affects an individual's ability to concentrate and fully control their own actions and reactions.

Autism- a disturbance believed to be caused by genetic factors and/or brain damage that affects a person's mental, social or and emotional development.

Birth Family- Family members related by genetic factors...Birth Records Counselling- a service that is offered to help people find adoption related records.

Care Order- a court order that provides protection for children in the care of adults Often used if children are place outside the home

CAMHS- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Cerebral Palsy- a non-hereditary condition that is the result of brain damage before, during or after the birth process. Children with cerebral palsy lack muscle control in one or more parts of the body.

Child Protection Services- Local authority neglect and abuse.

Connexions- Services offered to adolescents age 16 to 19. Services include job search, accommodation allowances and counselling.

Contact- Direct contact includes face-to-face interaction between an adopted child and birth relatives. Indirect contact includes letter writing through post-box services.

Cognitive Delay- Marked developmental delay in a person's ability to process information or to think logically or analytically.

Conduct Disorder- a condition characterised by a strong unwillingness to meet the norms or expectations of society.

Developmental Delay- a delay in a child's progress when measured against the skills of children who are the same age.

Depression- an overwhelming feeling of despair usually lasting longer than two weeks

Disability Services- Services offered to persons with a lifelong disability such as autism, cerebral palsy, learning difficulty, behavioural difficulty or other medical condition.

Disruption- The break up of an adoption.

Dyslexia- Neurological difficulty that interferes with the visual processing of information.

Dyspraxia- Neurological difficulty that interferes with gross motor skills.

Encopresis- a condition in which children regularly soil their pants. This can be a one off occurrence or may be a symptom of an underlying disease.

Enuresis- Bed-wetting and sometimes daytime wetting. Can be caused by underlying illness such as untreated diabetes, spina bifida or stress. Most of the time the cause is unknown.

ESLAC- Educational Support for Looked After Children.

Expressive/Receptive Language- Expressive language is the amount of language the child is able to use to speak or write to others about his or her thoughts. Receptive language is how much language the child can understand and process when others speak or write to him or her.

Foetal Alcohol Effect (FAE)- (see foetal alcohol syndrome) Less severe than FAS.

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome- Lifelong mental and emotional difficulties that are the result of prenatal alcohol exposure. FAS is an organic brain disorder that manifests itself in central nervous system dysfunction. Delayed pre-natal and postnatal growth and characteristic facial features. Symptoms include: learning difficulties,.attention deficit and hyperactivity, poor social judgement and impulsive behaviour.

Foster Carer- Temporary carer who provides a home for children whose parents are unable to care for them. Children who are the subject of care orders live in foster placements

Individual Education Plan- a plan made by educators and others that outlines the specific skills the child needs to develop as well as how the child's needs will be addressed in the learning environment

Intermediary Services- Services provided to people affected by adoption to facilitate contact between adopted persons and birth relatives.

Kinship Adoption- Adoption by a person who has established a kinship bond with the child such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle.

LAC- Looked After Child.

Later Life Letter- a letter that is written by a social worker, usually given to the adoptive parents, that explains the circumstances surrounding why the child's birth parent could not care for them.

Learning Difficulties- The presence of: impaired intelligence, with impaired social functioning, which started in early childhood, with a lasting effect on development.

Life Story Book- a book that should be given to a child that contains photographs and mementos of the child's life. The purpose is to give the child a sense of history about his or her early childhood. There are usually photos of the birth parent(s), a copy of the birth certificate, photos of the hospital or town where the child formerly lived and photos of other members of the family or foster carers with whom the child had a relationship.

Matching- When a child is matched to a prospective adoptive family. There are many considerations for matching such as social, cultural developmental factors to name only three.

Matching Panel- When a child is matched to a family for a pre-adoptive placement, an approval by an adoption panel within the local authority must take place. The child's social worker and the prospective adopter's social worker attend this meeting to seek approval for the match. This meeting is often referred to as "matching panel"

Mental Illness- Abnormal or unstable behaviour, thoughts, or feelings. People are defined as mentally disordered because they behave, think, or feel differently from most others.

Motor Skills- a person's ability to use large and small muscle groups.

Neurological Difficulty- emotional or physical problems that are the result of damage to the Central Nervous System or brain.

Occupational Therapy- Physical skills training that often enables disabled persons to better manage daily living. Therapy may include teaching infants to suck or swallow, or teaching children how to use a pencil or eating utensils if the child is having difficulty doing such tasks.

Pastoral Care Plan- In addition to the individual education plan, the pastoral care plan focuses more on the emotional behavioural functioning at school.

Placement Order- Legal order for a child to be 29 placed in foster care or pre-adoptive placement.

Post-Box Services- Services offered by local authorities to manage indirect contact (letter exchange) between birth relatives and the adoptive child and adoptive family.

Post-Sixteen Services- Services offered to youths between the ages of 16 and 19. These services can include counselling, assistance with accommodation and some financial assistance.

Pre-natal Exposure- Exposure to drugs or alcohol before birth while still in utero.

Psychotherapy- Process of interaction between a therapist and a patient aimed at helping to decrease distress arising from emotional or thinking disorders.

Reactive Attachment Disorder- a condition resulting from an early lack of consistent care, characterised by a child or infant's inability to make appropriate social contact with others.

Relinquishment- The process by which, birth parents voluntarily surrender rights to parent their children.

Respite Care- Childcare and other services designed to give parents temporary relief from their responsibility as caregivers. This is usually offered only as a part of a support plan to parents of children with lifelong special needs.

Residential Care- Accommodation for children who are unable to remain in their home due to running away, truanting or other behaviour difficulties.

Review- A formal scheduled meeting to review care plans, adoption support plans or other plans. Usually the review includes the child's carers and other professionals who are providing services to the child in accordance with the plan.

Separation Anxiety- Excessive and persistent anxiety about being separated from one's home or parents that interferes with regular daily activities.

Sexual Abuse- Abuse of a sexual nature. Usually including oral sex, penetration, anal sex, penetration by instrumentation or other inappropriate means. Can include participation in videography and pornography.

Sexualised Behaviour- Behaviour exhibited by a child that is considered to be well beyond the sexual behaviour of children the same age and level of development. Disordered sexual behaviour usually the result of being sexually abused. With help and appropriate boundaries, most children exhibiting sexualised behaviour learn to relate to others in an appropriate manner.

Special Education- Specialised educational services designed to address the special needs of the child within the educational setting.

Sibling Group- Siblings related by birth into the same family, usually placed and adopted together.

Support Network- Number of people who support the family such as relatives, community members, friends and professionals.

Special Needs- Conditions that make some children more vulnerable. Children with special needs can be more difficult to find an adoptive family for due to the level of care that may need to be offered to them by the family. Children with attachment difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome, behaviour difficulties, history of sexual abuse, learning difficulties, attention deficit disorder, physical difficulties, of a minority race, age, sibling group or history of abuse and neglect are considered to be children with special needs.

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James, M (2006) **An Adoption Diary: One Couple's Journey from Infertility to Parenthood.** BAAF

Van Gulden, H., Bartels-Rabb, L. (1995) **Real Parents, Real Children: Parenting the Adopted Child** Crossroad Publishing, U.S.

Wolff, J., (2000) **Secret Thoughts of An Adoptive Mother,** Vista Communications.

Macleod, J., Macrae, S., Ed's (2006) **Adoption Parenting: Creating a Toolbox,** Building Connections

Transracial/Transethnic Adoption

Alpherson, M. (1997) **International Adoption Handbook,** Holt and Company, USA.

Bleir, R. (2004) **Cross Cultural Adoption: How to Answer Questions from Family, Friends and Community** Regnery Publishing

Lewis, R., Dyer, J. (2003) **I Love You Like Crazy Cakes,** Little Brown and Company, USA

Harris, P. (2006) **In Search of Belonging: Reflections of Transracially Adopted People.** BAAF ISBN 10906969770

Gay and Lesbian Adoption

McGarry, K.J. (2003) **Fatherhood for Gay Men: An Emotional and Practical Guide to Becoming a Gay Dad** Harrington Park Press.

Hicks, S., McDermott, J. (1998) **Lesbian and Gay Fostering and Adoption: Extraordinary Yet Ordinar**y Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Single Parent Adoption

Varon, L. (2000) **Adopting on Your Own: The Complete Guide to Adoption for Single Parents** Farrar Straus Giroux.

Owen, M. (1999) **Novices, Old Hands and Professionals: Adoption by Single People** British Association for Adoption & Fostering.

Understanding Teenagers

Coleman, D. (2005) **Emotional Intelligence,** Bantam Books, USA

Gurrian, M., (2006) **The Wonder of Boys: What Parents, Mentors and Educators Can Do to Shape young Boys Into Exceptional Men,** Simon and Schuster, USA.

Wiseman, R. (2003) **Queen Bees and Wannabees: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends and Other Realities of Adolescence** Piatkus Books

Children's Books

J Foxon (2001-2006) **The Nutmeg Series** (BAAF)

Argent, H., Lane, M (2003) **Adoption: What happens in Court?** (BAAF)

Sheehan, J. (2003) **And Baby Makes Two** (BAAF)

Shah, S. (2003) **Adoption: What it is and What it Means.** (BAAF)

Telling

Chennells, P. Morrison, M. (1998) **Talking about Adoption To Your Adopted Child.** BAAF

Wolfs, R. (2008) **Adoption Conversations.** BAAF

Henderson, P. Edge, L. (2004) **A Blessing from Above.** A Little Golden Book

Livingston, C. Robins, A. (1996) **Why was U Adopted.** A Lyle Stuart Book Carol Publishing Group

Lidster, A. Allpress, R. **Chester and Daisy move on.** BAAF

Kirk, D. (1999) **Little Miss Spider.** Callaway & Kirk

Loomans, D. Howard, K. (1991) **The Lovables in the Kingdom of Self-Esteem.** H J Kramer Inc

Kasza, K. (1992) **A Mother for Choco.** Puffin Book

Walvoord Girard, L. Friedman, J.(1986) **Adoption Is For Always.** Albert Whitman & Company

Thomas, P. Harker L. (2003) **My New Family A first Look At Adoption** Hodder Children's Book

Gray, K. McQuillan, M. (2003) **Our Twitchy** Random House

van Genechten, G. (2003) **Because I Love You So Much** Published in Belguim

Bunting, E. Soentpiet, C. (2001) **Jin Woo** Clarion Books

Byrne, S. Chambers, L. (1997) **Nathan's Story - Belonging doesn't mean forgetting.** BAAF

Thom, M. Macliver, C. **Bruce's Story.** The Children's Society

Sunderland, M. (2003) **The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back.** Speechmark

Kuneat, A. Hilderbrandt, A. **And then You arrived and we became a family**

Ironside, V. (2004) **A Huge bag of Worries** Hodder childrens' books

Thomas, P. **My parents picked Me**

Parr, T. (2008) **We belong together – a book about adoption and families** (Suitable for young children- as an introduction)

Mitchell, C. (2006) **Welcome home forever child** Author House

Patterson, E. **Twice Upon a time Born and adopted**

Birth Parents

Charlton, Crank, Kansara, Oliver (1998) **Still Screaming: Birth Parents Compulsorily Separated from their Children.** After Adoption. Manchester. ISBN: 0953257401

Clapton, G. (2003) **Birth Fathers and their Adoption Experiences.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 1843100126

Argent, H. Cairns, K. (2004) **Related by Adoption: A Handbook for Grandparents and other Relatives**

Trauma and Sensory Information

Levine, P. and Kline, M. (2008) North Atlantic Books, 1st edition, **Trauma-Proofing Your Kids: Parents Guide for Instilling Joy, Confidence and Resilience**

Resources

British Association for Adoption and Fostering
(BAAF)
Skyline House
200 Union Street
London
SE1 OLX
Tel: 02075 932 000
Website: **www.baaf.org**

Adoption UK
46 The Green
South Bar Street
Banbury
OX16 9AB
Tel: 01295 752 240
Website: **www.adoptionuk.org**

After Adoption
12-14 Chapel Street
Manchester
M3 7NH
Tel: 08000 568 578
Website: **www.talkadoption.org.uk**

NORCAP
112 Church Road
Wheatley
Oxfordshire
OX33 1LU
Tel: 01865 875 000
Website: **www.norcap.org.uk**

Family Futures
3 & 4 Floral Place
7-9 Northampton Grove
London
N1 2PL
Website: **www.familyfutures.co.uk**

Adoption Plus
Adoptionplus Ltd
Moulsoe Business Centre
Cranfield Road
Moulsoe
Newport Pagnell
MK16 0FJ
Website: **www.adoptionplus.co.uk**

Hertfordshire Adoption Service
Farnham House (SFAR129)
Six Hills Way
Stevenage
AdoptiveFamilies.com
www.adoptivefamilies.com

Post-Adoption Centre
5 Torriano Mews
Torriano Avenue
London NW5 2RZ
Telephone: 020 7284 0555
Website: **www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk**

General Register Office
(To obtain adoption certificates)
Adoptions Section
Room D09
Trafalgar Road
Southport
PR8 2HH

Adoption Contact Register
General Register Office
(To obtain adoption certificates)
Adoptions Section
Room D09
Trafalgar Road
Southport
PR8 2HH

Every Child Matters, Change for Children
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Parents Centre
www.parentscrentre.gov

Oasis (Overseas Adoption Support and Information)
Helpline **08702 417 069**
www.adoptionoverseas.org

Education Resources

Advisory Centre for Education
Tel: 0808 800 5793
Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

IPSEA (Independent Panel for Special Education Advice)
England and Wales: **0800 018 7016**

OAASIS (Office for Advice, Assistance Support and Information on Special and Additional Needs)
Brock House
Grigg Lane
Brockenhurst
Hampshire SO42 7RE
Helpline: **01590 622 880**

Parent Partnership
8 Wakley Street
London
EC1V 7QE
Website: **www.parentpartnership.org.uk**

Special and Additional Needs Resources

National Autistic Society
Juniper House
High Street
Stretham
Cambridgeshire
CB6 7LD
Telephone: **01353 648 797**
Parent-to-Parent Line: **08009 520 520**

The Dyscovery Centre (Asperger's, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia)
4a Church Street
Whitechurch
Cardiff
CF14 2DZ
Telephone: **02920 628 222**
Website: **www.dyscovery.co.uk**

TFH Special Needs Toys
5-7 Severnside Business Park
Severn Road
Stourport-on-Severn
Worcestershire
DY13 9HT
Telephone: **01299 827 820**
Website: **www.specialneedstoys.com**

British Epilepsy Association
New Anstey House
Gateway Drive
Yeadon
Leeds
LS19 7XY
Helpline – **0808 800 5050**
Website: **www.epilepsy.org.uk**

The National Association for Gifted Children
Website: **www.nagc.org.uk**

National Organisation on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome – UK
14B Hoop Lane
London
England
NW11 8JL
Website: **www.nofas-uk.org**

National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service (ADDISS)
Premier House
112 Station Road
Edgeware
Middlesex HA8 7BJ

It is probable that as our services grow, we will add to our existing list of resources. Contact the Adoption Support Office for updated lists.

Adoption Support Service
01438 844 488
www.hertsdirect.org